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JAMES BURNSIDE, OF NORTHAMPTON COUNTY,
PENNSYLVANIA.

BY JOHN W. JORDAN.

James Burnside, the first representative from the County of Northampton in the Assembly of Pennsylvania, was born in the County of Meath, Ireland, June 4, 1708. His parents were members of the Established Church, in good circumstances, and gave him a liberal education. In 1734 he sailed for Georgia, where for some time he was employed as accountant for the trustees of the Colony, at Savannah. Purchasing a small plantation on an island near the town, in 1736 he was married to Margaret, daughter of Charles and Margaret Bevan, by whom he had a daughter, Rebecca, born March 31, 1740, who two days later was baptized by Rev. George Whitefield.

His plantation dwelling-house having been destroyed by fire, he removed to Savannah, where a similar misfortune befell him, and in consequence of these repeated losses, in 1740 he accepted the position of general manager of the Orphan House, "Bethesda," founded by Whitefield. Here he became acquainted with the Rev. John Hagen, Moravian missionary to the Indians, and John Brownfield, the secretary of Governor Oglethorpe, and attended the religious meetings held in the house of the latter. After the death of his wife, in 1743, with his daughter he sailed for Philadelphia, and visited Bethlehem. On being notified of his appointment to a civil office at Charleston, South Carolina, he set out thither in the autumn of 1744, after having placed his daughter in the Moravian boarding-school at Germantown. Two years later she was transferred to the school at Nazareth, where she died August 12, 1746.¹

¹ To defray the expenses of education and maintenance of his daughter during his absence, Mr. Burnside disposed of the following personal

Early in the year 1745 Mr. Burnside left Charleston for New York, and in May proceeded to Bethlehem, where on August 19 he was married to Mary Wendover (maiden name Peterse), widow of Hercules Wendover, of New York. In 1749 he purchased a plantation of three hundred and fifty acres near Bethlehem, on which he erected a substantial mansion, where he resided until his decease.

On the erection of Northampton County, in 1752, Mr. Burnside was elected, after a sharp contest, by upwards of three hundred majority, its first representative in the Assembly. His opponent was ex-Surveyor-General William Parsons, the Proprietary candidate and founder of Easton. During the two sessions, 1752 and 1754, in which he served, he was a member of several important committees,—finance, Indian affairs, and amendments to the charter of the Province. He was finally defeated for a reelection by his old opponent, William Parsons, who, in writing to Secretary Richard Peters, states, “Mr. Burnside is going from place to place, beating his breast, declaring that he would serve the county to the utmost of his power, if he was chosen.”

James Burnside died at his plantation August 8, 1755, and his remains were interred at Bethlehem. His widow, in 1758, disposed of the plantation to the Moravian Church, and then removed to New York, where she died in January of 1774. During the Revolution the Burnside mansion was occupied for a time by the captive major-general, the Baron Riedesel, and his accomplished wife, with their suite.

property: one silver net apron, four gold and silver handkerchiefs, five large silver spoons, three silver teaspoons, one silver strainer, one pair silver sugar-tongs, one silver knife, one looking-glass set in silver, one jet heart inlaid with gold, one silver girdle buckle set with stones, one seal set in gold, one music box set in silver, one carnelian bell with gold clapper, two gold locketts, one enamelled portrait of King Charles II., one gold ring, four diamond sparks, one diamond spark, one agate-handled knife, one striped lustre gown, one striped satin night-gown, two portraits of Charles and Margaret Bevan, one fine fan, one pair gold earrings, one suit of broad Brussels lace, two silk gowns, pewter dishes and plates, and numerous other articles.